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Youth'ful revival of *avanaddha vadhyas*

by Sulochana Rajendran

In a time when the 'drums' of world are uniting to form a on rhythm by absorbing the cultures of various countries, own *avanaddha vadhyas* (per- son instruments) grouped as and *sushirakka vadhyas* (ma- and minor) have been clamour- for recognition, some perhaps, struggling to survive.

hanks to the efforts of Percus- Arts Centre of Bangalore and e energetic and enthusiastic ussion *vidwans* like Karaikudi i, T.H. Vinayakram (Vikku) others, instruments which ld have gone into oblivion and me museum pieces, have sur- d. They are alive in percussion mbles and are making head- in seeking a legitimate place he concert forum. And one is py that Konnakkol (oral recita- of solfas), morsing, dholu, uvadhyam have all got a new e of life. Tala Vadhya Cutcheri, the percussion ensemble is erally known as, has come to

this context, Vadya Laya Vrin- f Bombay founded by Ambala- ha T.S. Nandakumar stands for the 'teen-age' ensemble it is formed of, (student- *ites in the age group of 10-19 rs), but displaying professional* puzha Brothers, Nandakumar has instinctively taken to the percus- sion stream groomed as he is by Kaithavana Madhava Das. Besides being an amiable accompanist he has shown his flair for teaching — training many students in a num- ber of music institutions. Not con- tent with just training, he has found an exposure medium too for the students to hone their skills and play in unison.

Vadya Laya Vrinda, Nandaku- mar's brainchild, is a composite unit drawn from teen-aged talents. The artistes are all, save Konnok- kol, basically trained in mridan- gam but given training also in thavil ghatam, kanjira etc. for en- semble purpose. Under his disci- plined tutelage, the ensemble has been performing with exemplary synchrony and individual excel- lence.

Having performed all over the city and in the South, the Vadya *Laya Vrinda* has come out with two audio cassettes entitled Jewels of

Listening to the cassettes, one is touched by the youngsters instant rapport with their medium and with their co-participants, which results in establishing rapport with listeners too. The opening strains of Hamsadhwani on the violin (by Vanmali Dikshit) invoking *'Moo- ladhara Moorthy'*, serves as a sweet melodic plank for the teen- agers to go on an *Adi Tala* trek with skeins of rhythmic intricacies (Jewel 1). Opener Vidya makes an impressive start with her Konna kol, reciting the intricate sollus with exquisite ease.

Of the three mridangists, the youngst Vijay Natesan is a child prodigy, who brims with energy and enthusiasm and plays with alacrity and artistry. Vivek Rajago- pal, for his age, displays quiet grace, playing even the intricate passages with *sarvalaghu* ease.

N. Chidambaram, an IIT stu- dent, is the stalwart of the team. Shaping as a mature artiste, he strives for polish and poise. Credit-

ensembles played by Kumar. And Sriram's Kanjira and Prasad Nair's ghatam speak for their versatility. The ensemble is complete with morsing played by Gopalan. The players entering rhythmic *mohera* and *korvai* frays in turns and joining up for a grand finale, is a crowning effort.

Follows a *misra chapu thani* after just the *pallavi* of *kriti, Kailasana- thana* tagged on with *swaraprast- harns*. The *vinayasa* that domi- nates leaving the *kriti* to a truncat- ed strip, moves on to more intri- cate plane. If *Tisra Nadai* makes a lilting composition in itself, the *Khandam* on mridangam with the others lending 'Arudi trimes', the sweeps into *Misram* capped with *Sankiranam* makes the jewel spar- kle.

No doubt the *vinyasa* has an impact. However a point to be noted here is whether one could take liberty with a great piece of a *kriti*. If time or space is a con- straint, a simple tune could have been substituted, as they do in Hindustani music — a *lehera*, rather than clipping a grand piece of a *kriti* which does not go with tradition.

The jewel in the crown of rhythm is however the *Bhairavi Ata Tala Varnam* in the second cassette. The grand lustrous piece

ed in fine streamlined two *tempi* (slow and fast), interspersed with *tisram* making it a grand-slam presentation. It stood as a class by itself. Kudos to the guru and the *chelas* for their *sadhaka* and *sad- hana*. In this, mention must be made of the violinist Madhavan and Sitara Janardhan, both of whom have played with equal poise. *Nagumomu* (Abheri) high- lighted the youngsters' accompa- nying proficiency.

The concluding *Ragam Tana Pallavi* in Kalyani and Adi (techn cally *(Chatusra Tripuda) Khand Gati* was a major number w dressed up with all rhythmic frill in an odd paced cycle with od take off, giving enough exercise t the skill of the players and intel gence of the listeners.

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